

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT INTERIM
COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 21, 2003 – 2:00 p.m.– Room 303 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Beverly Evans, Senate Chair
Rep. Craig W. Butters, House
Sen. Gene Davis
Sen Thomas Hatch
Sen. Parley G. Hellewell
Sen. Bill Wright
Rep. Margaret Dayton
Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Bradley T. Johnson
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. Loraine T. Pace
Rep. Darin G. Peterson
Rep. David Ure
Rep. Stephen H. Urquhart

Members Absent:

Rep. Eli Anderson
Rep. Roger E. Barrus
Rep. Jackie Biskupski
Rep. Michael R. Styler

Staff Present:

Brian Allred, Policy Analyst
Jeanenne B. Larson, Associate General Counsel
Joy L. Miller, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials can be found at <http://www.image.le.state.ut.us/imaging/history.asp> or by contacting the committee secretary, Joy Miller, at 538-1032.

1. Committee Business

Chair Butters called the meeting to order at 2:20 p.m. He noted that Rep. Anderson and Rep. Barrus were excused from the meeting.

MOTION: Rep. Ure moved to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2003 meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Davis, Sen. Hatch, Rep. Donnelson, Rep. Noel, Rep. Pace, and Rep. Urquhart absent for the vote.

2. Update on Drought Conditions

Mr. Dennis Strong, Division of Water Resources, distributed information on Utah's "Hydrologic Outlook." He reviewed the amount of precipitation the state has received, streamflow forecasts, and the amount of water stored in Utah's major reservoirs. Utah has been categorized nationally as suffering extreme to exceptional drought conditions throughout the entire state.

Mr. Randy Julander, National Resources Conservation Service, distributed information and graphs depicting Utah's snowpack and streamflow situation. He said May precipitation has lessened demand for irrigation. However, given the amount of snowpack remaining, streamflow levels will decline rapidly.

3. Drought Impacts

A. Wildlife Management Plans

Mr. Kevin Conway, Division of Wildlife Resources, distributed information on the impacts of continued drought on Utah's big game and Utah's sport fisheries. Mule deer populations have been hardest hit by the drought. Hatchery production has been decreased by approximately 12 percent.

B. Farmers & Ranchers

Mr. Kyle Stephens, Department of Agriculture and Food, distributed and discussed a handout "Utah Drought Damage Assessment Report by County." He noted that 75 percent of farms in the state have suffered a loss with damage reaching a total of over \$286 million. Mr. Stephens distributed information on the "Nonfat Dry Milk Emergency Feed Assistance Program."

C. Grazing Permits

Mr. Bert Kulesza, Deputy Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service, indicated that the forests are under severe stress. He emphasized the need for a healthy grazing industry to accomplish rangeland objectives. District rangers continue to work with permittees and are sensitive to their needs.

D. State Parks

Mr. Steve Roberts, Government Relations Coordinator, Division (Division of Parks and Recreation), distributed and reviewed "Drought Impacts on the Division Operations." Approximately half of the parks in the Utah State Park system are considered "boating parks" which account for 42 percent of the total revenue collected from state park operations. He reviewed the prognosis for boating in 2003.

4. Report on Trichomoniasis

Dr. Mike Marshall, State Veterinarian, reported on the testing process for Trichomoniasis in Utah. Trichomoniasis will cause a 30-50 percent loss in calves. They are working hard to educate individuals on the disease and the importance of testing. He pointed out that lack of funding is a problem.

5. Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans

Ms. Shelley Smith, BLM (Bureau of Land Management), stressed the importance of land use planning which is the primary tool for building consensus and providing the public a voice in BLM's land and resource management programs. She distributed a handout "Status Summary of Current Utah Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans (RMP)."

Mr. Larry Ross, Duchesne County Commissioner, commented that grazing, production of minerals, and recreation are major activities in Duchesne County. Public lands in America are expected to contribute \$1.7 billion to the federal, state, and local governments in a year's time. He indicated that much greater economic benefit is derived for private and public uses than from only government activity.

Mr. Wes Curtis, State Planning Coordinator, raised concerns relative to the planning processes which will set the direction for public lands management for the next 10-15 years. He explained that county and state

leaders have felt overwhelmed by the extensive planning process.

Mr. Dave Haslem, Uintah County Commissioner, discussed some of the problems the county has had in dealing with the existing management plan of the BLM. He expressed the frustrations they have felt in trying to receive assistance from the state in dealing with the planning process. He stressed the county's need for technical expertise that can be provided by the state.

Mr. Bob Morgan, Executive Director (Department of Natural Resources), explained that some of the expertise is provided to the counties through the Department.

Sen. Evans stressed the need to maximize the resources available. She suggested the Committee meet with county commissioners and others involved in the process to facilitate and coordinate the process.

6. Weed Control

The issue was not discussed and will be addressed in a future meeting.

7. Other Items / Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Ure moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Buttars adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.